

## MEMO

To: State Rep. Tom Reynolds  
State Rep. Vincent Candelora  
Mark N. Paquette  
Regional Efficiency Subcommittee Members

From: Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) at CCSU  
Andrew Clark, Director  
John Radasci, University Assistant – Research and Policy

Date: September 2, 2008

Re: **Recommendations to Regional Efficiency Subcommittee**

---

The Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy at CCSU supports the efforts of the Smart Growth Task Force to strengthen both regional planning and regionally provided services. Such proposals have often been resisted in the past. Further, we appreciate the opportunity to have some input into the array of proposals that will be evaluated. We offer the following suggestions:

- The most opportune time to strengthen regional approaches is when new programs are initiated, particularly if discretionary funding is involved; before roles are defined, turf issues become insurmountable, and incompatible practices make integration difficult. As there are fiscal impact and municipal impact evaluations, consideration should be given to a proactive regional impact evaluation for proposed legislation and funding decisions that affect the provision of planning and services at a substate level. **High Priority, Low to No Cost**
- For many years transportation funding has provided the bulk of support for regional planning organizations and therefore has had a large influence on staffing and programs that these organizations can support. The general grant program for regional planning organizations (RPOs) that is administered by OPM, while declining as a share of RPO support, has been important because it allows some flexibility to do other things and to integrate these with transportation plans and policies. As the responsibilities of RPOs broaden, the general state grant program deserves greater political and budgetary support. **High Priority, Moderate Cost**
- Numerous organizations are currently providing training for municipal officials in the area of land use education. These efforts are now coordinated by OPM through an advisory committee that is facilitated by UCONN's Center for Land Use Education and Research. (CLEAR). While this education provides a good background in procedures,

concepts and practices, many towns need in-the-field advice on particular development proposals. State agencies have been unable to continue to provide this advice at the same level as in past years. A cadre of professionals, either on staff or on retainer, is needed at the regional or multi-regional level, who can provide timely, specialized and objective advice. As an example, the CT Northeast regional planning organization has an experienced person on staff that advises area towns on matters concerning transportation projects. The Massachusetts Division of Community Services has started a "Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Program" (grants to municipalities up to \$1000 for short-term problem solving). The regional services incentive grant administered by OPM may be expanded to foster this type of assistance program. **Moderate Priority, Low to Moderate Cost**

- Smart Growth will bring an array of new approaches, experimentation, knowledge and skills that were not in demand in past. Partnership for Strong Communities and Connecticut Main Street are examples of leaders in collecting such research information, conducting education seminars and disseminating information to towns and practitioners. While Connecticut is on the early, steep slope of the Smart Growth learning curve, incentives to development, coordinate, train and then bundle this new information at the regional level where appropriate should be valuable. Perhaps the CLEAR model could be expanded or matched by a like organization. The above recommendation concerning the availability of persons at the regional level who can provide timely, specialized and objective advice applies equally here. **Moderate Priority, Low to Moderate Cost**
- Smart Growth will require continuing and close coordination between area redevelopment efforts and transportation, particularly transit. The frequently repeated phrase that "transportation is done at the state level and land use decisions are done at the municipal level" is simplified but largely true. There is a disconnect between DOT's limited, self-assumed role of maintainer and manager of the system and scatter towns approving individual development proposals without the ability to assess long-term, regional transportation impacts.

Integrated land use and transit decisions require a closer partnership among municipal officials, transit authorities and regional and state entities. Each must believe they are a true stakeholder in the overall objective of smart growth in their region. Transit authorities consist of one to a few municipalities that are frequently incompatible with regional planning boundaries. Like DOT, their role is often viewed as limited to the maintenance and management the transit system. A comprehensive study is required to identify opportunities for an intergovernmental structure that is inclusive and better supports a regionally viable transit system within the context of Smart Growth. **Low Priority, Low Cost**